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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ DEC 8405
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 4536
RUEHN/AMEMBASSY OSLO IMMEDIATE 0358
RUEHQ/AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE 5194
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE 4266
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE 2217
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHG/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1416
RUEHBO/USMILGP BOGOTA CO IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 010981

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TAGS: MARR PGOV PREL PTER CO EC

SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY: PRESIDENT URIBE'S NOVEMBER 30
MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR WOOD

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: President Uribe told the Ambassador November 30 that he strongly supported judicial investigations of paramilitary-political ties, and was committed to defending Colombia's institutions. He voiced concern about the possible involvement of paramilitary leaders detained in La Ceja in on-going criminal activities, and asked the U.S to expedite any extradition requests to enhance his leverage on them. He said the GOC was increasing its military efforts against new narcotraffickers, as well as the FARC, and reiterated his request for precision-guided munitions. He said Colombia would resume spraying illegal coca on the Ecuadorian border after consulting with Ecuadorian President Palacio, and showed interest in proposing a political reform package aimed at introducing greater transparency and accountability in the Colombian Congress. End Summary

Paramilitary-Political Scandal

¶2. (C) Uribe said the current paramilitary-political scandal was the result of his democratic security policy and the paramilitary peace process. He strongly supported the Supreme Court's and the National Prosecutor's (Fiscal) investigation of paramilitary-congressional ties. Uribe said he had told Fiscal Mario Iguaran that he should vigorously pursue all leads and should prosecute any public official involved in paramilitary crimes. He stressed that the investigations reflected the strength of Colombia's public institutions. Uribe rejected opposition calls to close the Congress (the opposition has since withdrawn the idea).

¶3. (C) Uribe contrasted his record in prosecuting the paramilitaries with that of his predecessors. He said previous Colombian governments had been & too indulgent with terrorist groups, and noted that former President Cesar Gaviria and former Defense Minister Rafael Pardo* both of whom have sharply criticized Uribe's handling of the paramilitary process* did little to halt the growth of these groups while in office. Uribe added that many current legislators had never revealed their roles in crimes committed by the leftwing terrorist group M-19 and other criminal organizations.

Paramilitaries in La Ceja

¶ 14. (C) Uribe voiced concern that paramilitary leaders detained in La Ceja were continuing their criminal activities. Uribe said he had publicly announced earlier in the day that if the GOC determined that the La Ceja detainees had ordered the murders, he would remove their Justice and Peace Law benefits, transfer them to maximum security prisons, and approve their extraditions. Uribe said the La Ceja paramilitaries had responded by asking that Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo meet with them. He had ordered Restrepo not to do so.

¶ 15. (C) Uribe asked the Ambassador to expedite any extradition requests the U.S. might have against paramilitary leaders in La Ceja. This would give him another tool to pressure the paramilitaries to meet their peace process obligations; it would also enable the GOC to move quickly to extradite those who did not comply. Uribe also requested any information that the U.S. had regarding the La Ceja paramilitaries, involvement in the recent Medellin murders or other criminal activities.

FARC and Narcotraffickers

¶ 16. (C) Uribe said he had ordered the military to step up efforts to capture Daniel & El Loco Barrera, a major buyer of coca from the FARC who operates in Meta, as well as other key narcotraffickers. He said the GOC continued its counternarcotics efforts, but noted the narcotraffickers and

the FARC still have substantial economic resources. Uribe asked the Ambassador for his assessment of the economic situation of the FARC and other narcotraffickers.

¶ 17. (C) The Ambassador said GOC and U.S. counternarcotics efforts were paying off. The U.S. would spray 160,000 hectares of illegal coca in 2006; Colombia had already manually eradicated an additional 40,000 hectares. The 200,000 total hectares eradicated in 2006 would be a new record. The Ambassador also praised the Colombia National Police and Armed Forces for their excellent work in combating poppy cultivation.

Precision Guided Munitions

¶ 18. (C) Uribe reiterated the GOC's request for precision guided munitions, saying this would be key in fighting the FARC. The Ambassador said we had provided the GOC with a limited number of such weapons, but were working to obtain more.

Ecuador and Coca Spraying on the Border

¶ 19. (C) Uribe voiced concern about Rafael Correa's victory in the second round of Ecuador's presidential elections, but said he had already invited him to visit Bogota. He conceded the GOC's decision to suspend spraying of illegal coca along the Ecuadorian border had been a mistake*noting it had led to massive planting in the protected area while gaining Colombia no political points in Ecuador. He said his Foreign Minister would provide him with a report on December 4 on the implications of resuming spraying; he would then call Ecuadorian President Palacio to inform him that the GOC would restart fumigation in the area.

Andean Trade Preferences Act

¶ 110. (C) Uribe said he had spoken with Speaker of the House Hastert on November 29 and urged him to support ATPA extension. He had also tried to contact Senator Grassley. The Ambassador reiterated our support for extension, and said

the Administration was working on this.
DRUCKER